

INF STD 289-1: Ethnographic Research Methods

Fall 2023

The Information Studies Department at UCLA acknowledges the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and So. Channel Islands). As a land grant institution, we pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahihirom (Elders) and 'Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present and emerging.

Professor: Thuy Vo Dang, Ph.D. (she/her)
Class Meetings: Wednesday, 12:30 - 3:50 PM in SEIS 111
Office Hours: by appt: calendly.com/thuyvodang
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Course Website: <https://bruinlearn.ucla.edu/courses/170812>

Description

4 units

Seminar, 3.5 hours. What ethnographic research methods do Information Studies professionals use to explore and understand how individuals make meaning from their lives and the communities to which they belong? How does fieldwork unfold and what ethical quandaries and complexities do ethnographers confront during the course of their research? This course serves as an introduction to ethnographic research methods, achieved through reading, discussion, workshoping, and practical engagement in fieldwork. Students will gain insight into how ethnographers conceive and structure their research endeavors, engage in participant observation within their chosen communities (including digital spaces), compile fieldnotes, prepare for and conduct interviews, and experiment with multimedia tools to analyze their data. During the quarter, we will discuss ethical and socio-political issues that ethnographers wrestle with as they immerse themselves in field research. This will encompass considerations of accountability, responsibility, and reciprocity, alongside the predicaments that emerge due to factors such as gender, race, class, and other potential inequities within social structures.

Required Texts:

Books (required)

- Behar, Ruth. 1997. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*. Boston: Beacon Press. Accessed August 16, 2023. ProQuest Ebook Central: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucla/detail.action?docID=6102898>
- Ong, Aihwa. 2003. *Buddha is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stack, Carol B. 1974. *All Our Kin : Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* [First edition]. New York: Harper & Row.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. New York: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822390404>

Books (recommended)

- Manalansan, Martin F. 2000. *Cultural Compass : Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America* / Edited by Martin F. Manalansan IV. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

*All other reading materials are available in electronic format and linked from the **Complete Reading List**.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required: None.

Learning Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, students will develop a critical understanding of ethnographic research as theory and method and gain hands-on experience collecting, analyzing, and writing up data using a variety of techniques.

Course Policies

Grades will be calculated using a standard scale.: A+ =98-100%; A =93-97; A- is 90-92; B+ =88-89; B =83-87; B- =80-82, C+ =78-79, C =73-77, C- =70-72, D+ =68-69, D =63-67, D- = 60-62, and F = anything 59% or below. Late assignments will be penalized one-third letter grade for every unexcused day overdue (e.g., B to B-). Extensions must be requested in advance of the assignment deadline.

Class participation makes up 20% of your final grade. Regular attendance will enable you to do well in this category. Come to every class prepared to discuss the week's readings and participate in activities. Your class participation grade depends not only on attendance and frequency of participation, but also on the substance of your participation and whether your comments and questions contribute to the creation of an intellectually rigorous learning community. The Discussion Board on BruinLearn is an excellent way to participate; you are welcome to start discussion threads of your own. If you cannot participate verbally or need assistance to do so, please meet with me as early as possible in the quarter to discuss strategies for improving your participation level and, if necessary, setting up alternatives to verbal in-class participation.

Grading Breakdown: Class Participation 20%; Proposal 10%; Field Notes 20%; Interview Analysis 20%; Ethnographic Product 20%; Presentation 10%.

Communication: I will regularly use BruinLearn to communicate with you about this class, so be sure to check your student email address several times each week. I strive to reply to student queries within two business days. If you email me and do not hear a reply within two business days, please resend your message.

Academic Integrity: UCLA is a community of scholars. In this community, all members including faculty, staff and students alike are responsible for maintaining standards of academic honesty. As a student and member of the University community, you are here to get an education and are, therefore, expected to demonstrate integrity in your academic endeavors. You are evaluated on your own merits. Cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions without the permission of the professor, or other kinds of academic dishonesty are considered unacceptable behavior and will result in formal disciplinary proceedings usually resulting in suspension or dismissal. Additional information can be found on the website for the Office of the Dean of Students: <https://deanofstudents.ucla.edu/student-conduct-code>

Accessibility: Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu.

Schedule // Complete Reading List*

*The professor reserves the right to modify this reading list and schedule to improve the learning outcomes for the class.

Week	Theme	Readings (all accessible here)	Assignments (due the week listed)
1 10/4	Introductions & Community Agreements		
2 10/11	What is ethnography?	Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." <i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i> . 22: 267-294. <i>The Vulnerable Observer, Ch. 1 & 2</i>	
3 10/18	Ethics in Fieldwork... Where is "the field?"	Rokay, Moska. 2021. "Critical Ethnography as an Archival Tool: A Case Study of the Afghan Diaspora in Canada." <i>Archivaria</i> (91), 176-201. <i>The Vulnerable Observer, Ch 3-6</i>	
4 10/25	Project design	Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 2003. "Ethnography on an Awkward Scale: Postcolonial Anthropology and the Violence of Abstraction," <i>Ethnography</i> 4(2):147-179. <i>All Our Kin (entire book)</i>	
5 11/1	Subjectivity and positionality	Simpson, Audra. 2007. "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice,' and Colonial Citizenship." <i>Junctures</i> 9: 67-80. <i>Buddha is Hiding, Prologue-Ch. 4</i>	Proposal (300-400 words) (10%)
6 11/8	Verifying and analyzing ethnographic data	Pool, Robert. 2017. "The verification of ethnographic data." <i>Ethnography</i> 18(3) 281-286 <i>Buddha is Hiding, Ch. 5-Afterword</i>	Field Notes (500-600 words) due (20%)
7 11/15	Feminist ethnography	Davis, Dana-Ain & Christa Craven. 2011. Revisiting Feminist Ethnography: Methods and Activism at the Intersection of Neoliberal Policy." <i>Feminist Formations</i> 23(2): 190-208. <i>Ordinary Affects</i>	
8 11/22	Virtual and patchwork ethnographies	Bonilla, Yarimar, and Jonathan Rosa. 2015. "#Ferguson, Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United	Interview Analysis (800-1000 words) due (20%)

		States." <i>American Ethnologist</i> 42 (1): 4–17. Günel, Varma, and Watanabe. 2020. "A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography." Cultural Anthropology Blog: https://culanth.org/fieldsights/a-manifesto-for-patchwork-ethnography <i>Ordinary Affects</i>	
9 11/29	Queering ethnographic research	Chatterjee, Shraddha. 2023. "Crisis epistemologies: a case for queer feminist digital ethnography." <i>Journal of Gender Studies</i> 32(5): 486-497 Lam, Son Ca. 2021. "Bearing Witness: Using Video Ethnography to Map Embodied Geographies of Home," <i>Amerasia Journal</i> , 47:1, 45-59.	
10 12/6	Learning from each other	<i>No readings this week</i> Activity: presentations	Presentations (10%)

Finals Week: Ethnographic product (20%) due by 12pm (Noon) on December 11, 2023

Resources:

Navigating Student Services

UCLA's new Student Affairs Guidebook gathers key resources for graduate and undergraduate students related to living and learning during these tumultuous times:

<https://www.studentaffairs.ucla.edu/guidebook>. Students can always consult the Student Care Managers program website for information about supportive services, including information about confidential one-on-one consultation: <http://www.studentincrisis.ucla.edu/Who-can-Help>.

Basic Needs/Food Resources

If you find yourself having difficulty accessing meals and/or groceries, go to this link for information on a variety of on- and off- campus resources available to students: <https://basicneeds.ucla.edu/>.

LGBTQIA Resources

The UCLA LGBT Campus Resource Center (www.lgbt.ucla.edu) provides a range of services supporting intersectional identity development as well as fostering unity, wellness, and an open, safe, and inclusive environment. UCLA also has a range of policies and services especially relevant to transgender students here: www.lgbt.ucla.edu/Trans-At-UCLA.

Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, depression, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. UC offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, consider utilizing the confidential mental health services available on campus. I encourage you to reach out to the Counseling Center for support (www.counseling.ucla.edu and 310-825-0768, available 24/7). An on campus counselor or after-hours clinician is available 24/7.

Assault, Harassment, and Discrimination

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the CARE Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 1stFloor Wooden Center West, CAREadvocate@caps.ucla.edu, (310) 206-2465. In addition, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides confidential counseling to all students and can be reached 24/7 at (310) 825-0768. You can also report sexual violence or sexual harassment directly to the University's Title IX Coordinator, 2241 Murphy Hall, titleix@conet.ucla.edu, (310) 206-3417. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD at (310) 825-1491. Please note, I am legally required to share information of this nature with the Title IX office.